DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 237 258 RC 014 330

AUTHOR Cho, Woong K.
TITLE Socio-Economic and Psychological Attributes of Rural Poverty in Mississippi. Research Bulletin Number 17.
INSTITUTION Alcorn State Univ., Lorman, Miss.
SPONS AGENCY Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 82
GRANT MISX4003
NOTE 44p.; For related document, see RC 014 331.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitudes; Blacks; Comparative Analysis; Cultural Differences; Income; *Poverty; *Psychological Characteristics; *Racial Differences; *Rural Areas; Rural Population; *Rural Urban Differences; *Socioeconomic Status; Values; Whites
IDENTIFIERS Culture of Poverty; Lewis (Oscar); *Mississippi; United States (South)

ABSTRACT

Data from two studies highlighted the socioeconomic and psychological attributes of poverty in rural Mississippi. In the first study, county census data were analyzed to determine changes in the socioeconomic status of rural and urban poor between 1960 and 1970. In 1970, the poverty count in rural and urban areas differed by 16.6%, down 5.1% from 1960. Poverty was disproportionately high in rural counties, where the median family income of $4,591 was nearly $3,000 lower than in urban counties, and among rural blacks, whose median family income was only $2,931. Rural poverty was highly correlated with race, farm residence, education level, unemployment, age, and family structure. Little rural-urban difference existed in the regional distribution of income sources. In the second study, researchers challenged Oscar Lewis' notion that a "culture of poverty" as related to attitudinal and value traits overrides basic ethnic orientation. Their findings indicated that race was likely to be a more significant determinant of attitude and value than was poverty. Data from a 248-household survey in Mississippi showed significant differences in responses between black and white samples and between black and poor samples. In general, rural blacks felt more fatalistic, suspicious, socially alienated, and less trusting than the rural poor whites. (SB)

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SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ATTRIBUTES OF RURAL POVERTY IN MISSISSIPPI

Research Bulletin Number 17

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RC014330

This research was supported by the USDA Research Grant No. MISX 4003, The Isolation of Factors Related to Levels and Patterns of Living in the Rural South.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ATTRIBUTES OF RURAL POVERTY IN MISSISSIPPI

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Principal Investigator, RR-1

Alcorn State University
1982

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Grant Authority and Compliance

This project was conducted in accordance with provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which states: "No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participating in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

Foreword

This research bulletin reports findings of Alcorn State University's research project on The Isolation of Factors Related to Levels and Patterns of Living in the Rural South (RR-1). Interest in pursuing this research was derived from the enduring concern of Alcorn State University in increasing income opportunities for low-income dwellers in Southwest Mississippi.

Dr. Woong K. Cho is to be commended for his unique approach and scholarly pursuit of this project. The efforts on the part of this researcher should make a significant contribution to the literature on rural poverty in Mississippi. The results of this study should be useful to the general public, planners and decision makers who are concerned about people.

J. B. Collins
Research Director

Acknowledgments

This research bulletin is the first part of Mississippi rural poverty study series related to a regional research project entitled "The Isolation of Factors Related to Levels and Patterns of Living in the Rural South." The purpose of the project is to provide a profile of rural poverty in the South and to serve as a basis upon which decision makers draw information instrumental to effective and meaningful program planning for rural development.

As a first step, this volume concentrates upon the socio-economic and psychological characteristics of rural poverty in Mississippi. The goal of this research is to identify types of rural poverty and to understand the feelings, beliefs, aspirations, and expectations of the poor with regard to their life condition and possibilities for escaping from poverty.

This research bulletin was made possible by a research grant from the U.S.D.A. Cooperative State Research Service; their support is gratefully acknowledged. In addition, appreciation is expressed to Dr. Jesse A. Morris and Dr. Johnnie B. Collins, Research Directors at Alcorn State University for their understanding of the importance of and continuous support for the rural poverty research. Appreciation is also expressed to Dr. M. S. Dhaliwal and Dr. Gerald Ritter for their time in reading the manuscript and to Mrs. Edna Martin for her cooperation in typing the manuscript. Finally, to members of the RR-1 Technical Committee go special thanks for the development of survey sampling procedures and questionnaire.

Although I am deeply indebted to many persons for encouragement, advice, and assistance, I am solely responsible for any inadequacies, oversights, and interpretations in this bulletin.

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Socio-economic Attributes: Rural versus Urban Counties

Introduction

Despite the fact that the United States is one of the few richest countries on earth, widespread and chronic poverty has been a persistent and difficult problem of the American experience. Even after the spending of billions in cash and assistance to eradicate poverty, particularly since Lyndon B. Johnson's declaration of "war on poverty" in 1964, 25.4 million Americans remained poor in 1970. During the 1960's, the war on poverty had been modestly successful in mitigating poverty by reducing it from 22 percent (39.9 millions) of the total population in 1960 to 13 percent (25.4 millions) in 1970. Since then, however, the poverty level in America has remained almost static with a 12 percent average through 1976, even though more money had been poured into public or private efforts to fight poverty.

On the basis of the well-accepted assumption that poverty in America is primarily and most compellingly an urban and racial problem, the federal poverty programs of the 1960's were built in overwhelming measure upon twin approaches, one urban and one racial. These approaches made some contribution to the reduction of poverty level on a national scale. But the 1970 census indicates that the locus of the nation's poverty has now shifted from urban to rural areas. The seriousness of rural poverty, and particularly the rural black plight, is evident. "Of the twenty-seven million persons in the nation with incomes below the poverty level in 1969, 44 percent lived in nonmetro areas, a percentage far greater than the nonmetro proportion of the total population. . .Of all nonmetro Blacks, 52.6 percent were classified as being in poverty; in the most rural nonmetro counties, 56.1 percent were below the poverty level" (Dillman and Hobbs, 1982:135). By whatever standard one applies, it appears that during the 1970's the nation's poor people were primarily rural and black.

It is equally true that even though we feel we have sufficient knowledge about poverty on a national scale, it is surprising how little is known about its incidence in particular states and in particular sections of a state. Countless studies have been done about poverty as a national problem and what the federal government ought to do about it. But we do not know much about poverty in rural Mississippi. Who are the poor in the Southwest part of Mississippi? How many are there? What kinds of people are they? What kinds of income do they have? How different are rural poor from urban poor in Southwest Mississippi?

These questions and others need to be addressed to provide information which can be used by policymakers and public administrators to improve

the quality of life for the poor in Southwest Mississippi. Therefore, the major purpose of this study is to analyze rural poverty as a major problem of Southwest Mississippi with emphasis on digging beneath the statistics to learn what rural poverty means and reveals in human terms.

Rural Poverty and Race

For the last three decades, much of the empirical research on poverty has been concerned with determining the incidence of poverty in certain areas and among certain social groups. Studies based on the 1950 data revealed that for most measures the relative socio-economic status of the rural poor blacks had deteriorated during the 1950's (Blalock, 1959; Cowhig and Beale, 1964). During the 1960's, however, it appeared that gains were somewhat greater among blacks than whites for almost every comparison (Farley and Hermalin, 1972; Villemez and Rowe, 1975). According to Weiss and Williamson (1972), urbanization and industrialization generated more employment opportunities and, as a result, made considerable impact on wage gains in general and socio-economic well-being of non-whites in particular. Hines et al. (1975) reported a similar finding that racial differentiation in numerous aspects of socio-economic position decreased in 1970 as one moved from rural to urban counties.

The importance of the relationship between income differentials among various groups and urbanization is heightened by recent changes in the economic and settlement structure of rural America. For example, between 1950 and 1970 the proportion of the rural labor force employed in farming, fishing, forestry, and mining declined from 31.1 percent to 10.1 percent and the proportions in manufacturing and services rose from 18.6 percent to 24.4 percent and from 16 percent to 23.3 percent, respectively (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975; Zuiches and Brown, 1978). Such a diversification of rural economic activity is expected to afford better employment opportunity for persons in rural areas regardless of race.

In contrast to this expectation, however, some empirical studies indicate that most rural economic growth in the South in the 1960's was in predominantly white areas (Hansen, 1973; Marshall, 1974). Nevertheless, it is also true that rural poverty in America in general and in the South in particular was mitigated somewhat more than urban poverty in the 1960's, partly due to the migration of poor southern farm laborers to northern cities (Bullamore, 1974) and the increasing availability of non-farm employment opportunities (Brown, 1978).

However, the incidence of poverty continues to be significantly higher in rural than urban America. Nearly 35 percent of the poor in America in 1975 were rural, and all of the counties which have been among the poorest 20 percent since 1950 are rural. But rural poverty is heavily concentrated in the South. In 1979, the White House Rural Development Background Paper

pointed out:

> *As evidence of the chronic and persistent nature of Southern rural poverty, 237 of the 255 counties that have fallen into the lowest 20 percent of rural counties by income rank in each decade since 1950 are located in that region. Also, there is a close relationship between areas with a concentration of poverty and the residential dominance of minority population.*

As pointed out in the White House Paper, the incidence of poverty is highly related to race with blacks being four times as likely as whites to be poor (Levitan, 1980).

Almost all of the findings suggest that the people left in rural poverty in the South and have little hope to escape from poverty under current government assistance programs are most likely to be rural poor blacks. They seem to pose an especially difficult problem for society, raising a question as to whether it is legitimate and effective to treat each poor family in the same way as the federal assistance programs have been doing so far.

Defining and Measuring Poverty

How do we know when someone is poor? The question is not easy to answer, because there is no clear dividing line between the poor and the nonpoor. In other words, poverty is a relative concept. It is largely for this reason that in America, the richest country on earth, 11 or 12 percent of the total population are still classified as poor. But insofar as it can be measured, poverty can be defined as a lack of basic necessities of life required to "maintain minimum standards of medical care, nourishment, housing, and clothing" (Kolko, 1962:70). The poor then are those who are lacking these necessities. But the amount of monetary income necessary to provide these necessities is equally difficult to determine because the "necessities of life" vary from time to time and place to place. Therefore, experts even differ over the purchasing power that an individual or family needs for the maintenance of minimum standards for the basic necessities of life.

Despite the problems of measuring poverty, the Social Security Administration in 1964 developed a poverty index that can be considered an ingenious and less arbitrary way to determine the official poverty line. This index is based on the cost of a minimum amount of food needed by the average American family, which is estimated by the Department of Agriculture on the basis of a 1955 survey at about $1.71 per person per day in a four-member family with two school-age children. The total cost of living of the low-income family is estimated to be three times its food costs (with adjustments for changes in the level of consumer prices). Farm families are viewed as needing only 85 percent of the cash income required by nonfarm families; two-person families with an elderly head, 10 percent less than those under 65 years of age, and households headed by females are slight-

ly less than other households. A summary of the federal government's definition of poverty income used in this study, based on 1970 prices, is presented in the Table I-1:

Table I-1 Weighted Average Thresholds at the Poverty Level in 1969, by Size of Family Unit and Sex of Head, by Farm and Nonfarm Residence

Size of family unit	Total	Nonfarm			Farm		
		Total	Male head	Female head	Total	Male head	Female head
All unrelated individuals	$1,834	$1,840	$1,923	$1,792	$1,569	$1,607	$1,512
Under 65 years	1,888	1,893	1,974	1,826	1,641	1,678	1,552
65 years and over	1,749	1,757	1,773	1,751	1,498	1,508	1,487
All families	3,388	3,410	3,451	3,082	2,954	2,965	2,757
2 persons	2,364	2,383	2,394	2,320	2,012	2,017	1,931
Head under 65 years	2,441	2,458	2,473	2,375	2,093	2,100	1,984
Head 65 years and over	2,194	2,215	2,217	2,202	1,882	1,883	1,861
3 persons	2,905	2,924	2,937	2,830	2,480	2,485	2,395
4 persons	3,721	3,743	3,745	3,725	3,195	3,197	3,159
5 persons	4,386	4,415	4,418	4,377	3,769	3,770	3,761
6 persons	4,921	4,958	4,962	4,917	4,244	4,245	4,205
7 or more persons	6,034	6,101	6,116	5,952	5,182	5,185	5,129

Source: United States Department of Commerce 1970 United State Census of Population. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.

Just how meager the official poverty income is can be judged by comparing it with the U.S. Department of Labor's estimate of the minimum income necessary to maintain an adequate standard of living. In 1977, the department reported that the minimum income necessary to support the average nonfarm family of four was about $9,700. In comparison with the median family income in 1977 of $16,009, the federal poverty line hardly seems generous.

This comparison suggests that the federal government's method of measuring poverty provides a very low minimum income. The method does have the advantage, however, of determining with some precision the number of Americans who are unquestionably without the means to enjoy the basic necessities of life.

Procedures

To determine changes of socio-economic status of the rural and urban poor over time, this study used a longitudinal, and comparative analysis of poverty between the rural and urban counties in Southwest Mississippi. A period of 1960 and 1970 was examined mainly because it witnessed a steady and gradual decline of poverty as was pointed out earlier. The Southwest Mississippi area was selected as the research site, because it is one of few areas in this country which has suffered severe chronic poverty and allows a comparison of poverty between urban and rural areas.

A rural area in this study was defined as a group of counties within an area whose rural population is more than 50 percent of the total population of the area. Whereas an urban area was defined as encompassing counties whose urban population is more than 50 percent of the total population. Under this definition, the rural area of Southwest Mississippi included nine of the twelve counties: Amite, Claiborne, Copiah, Franklin, Jefferson, Lincoln, Pike, Walthal, and Wilkinson. The urban area included Adams, Hinds, and Warren counties.

Data were compiled from the 1960 and 1970 Brown-Hines Files (Census Summary Data for counties). This data base was analyzed because of the abundance of county level data which can be aggregated in various ways for both 1960 and 1970. In addition, the study used the Continuous Work History Files which carries county level identification in order to overcome the lack of flexibility of individual household records in the Brown-Hines Files.

Analysis

1. Socio-economic Traits of Rural Poverty

By 1970, following the changes induced by the war on poverty, the South had made some progress in reducing poverty, however, residual rural poverty persisted. The area of Southwest Mississippi is no exception from this trend. It is clear from Table I-2 that despite a considerable decrease of rural population due to the heavy outmigration, the magnitude of poverty problem in the rural counties of Southwest Mississippi in 1970 was substantially more serious than that of the urban counties.

Between 1960 and 1970 the total population of the urban counties of Southwest Mississippi increased by 11.3 percent, whereas that of the rural counties decreased by 8.6 percent (Table I-2). During the same period the poverty count of the urban counties decreased by 12.1 percent while that of the rural counties decreased by 17.2 percent (Table I-2). The five percent difference in poverty mitigation in favor of the rural counties seems to be largely a result of the outmigration of rural poor. But the poverty population of the rural counties in 1970, as Table I-2 shows, still was proportionately larger than that of the urban counties (43.3 percent versus 26.7 percent). The difference of 16.6 percent between the rural and urban counties is too

serious to be overlooked. However, it needs to be pointed out here that the magnitude of the difference between the rural and urban counties in 1970 reveals about 5 percent improvement from the difference of 21.7 percent in 1960 (Table I-2).

A proportionately higher incidence of poverty in the rural counties is also obvious in terms of the distribution of median family incomes in 1970. As Table I-2 indicates, the median family income of the rural counties was only $4,591 while the figure for the urban counties was $7,513. The difference of almost $3,000 clearly demonstrates the comparatively more serious problem of poverty in the rural areas of Southwest Mississippi.

Furthermore, the distribution of the median family income in terms of race reveals that most of those who suffer from poverty in Southwest Mississippi are rural poor blacks. In 1970 the median family income of blacks in the rural counties, where the black population was almost half of the total population (48.4%), was only $2,931. This was even less than $2,954 of the weighted average thresholds at the poverty level of all rural families of the country (U.S. Census of Population), and even less than a half of the median family income ($6,641) of the rural whites in Southwest Mississippi (Table I-2).

The predicament of rural poor blacks was also shared by a considerable number of blacks in the urban counties. As Table I-2 shows, the median family income of the urban black is only $3,822 as compared with the urban whites' median family income of $10,168. However, the median family income of blacks in the urban counties in 1970 was about $430 higher than the weighted average thresholds at the poverty level of all nonfarm families in the country in 1969 (U.S. Census of Population). This comparison of median family incomes of blacks with the weighted average threshold at the poverty level of farm and nonfarm residence can be interpreted to support the assumption that rural blacks are more likely to be poor than urban blacks in Southwest Mississippi.

As we have seen in Table I-2, there was considerable mitigation of poverty from 1960 to 1970 in both the urban and rural areas of the Southwest Mississippi. But a close examination of urban and rural poverty improvement in the 1960's indicates more poverty mitigation in the rural than urban areas (17.2% versus 12.1% respectively), even though the incidence of poverty in 1970 continues to be proportionately much higher in the rural than urban areas (43.3% versus 26.7% respectively).

This poverty mitigation seems to be affected by several social factors. As Table I-3 shows, the decrease of poverty seems to be related to the slight decrease of black population, the drastic decrease of farm population and the slight improvement of educational level. In addition, the urban poverty mitigation seems to be partially affected by the slight improvement of unemployment rate, but not the rural poverty mitigation as shown in Table

Table I-2

Total Population, Poverty Count, Median Family Income of Urban and Rural Counties in Southwest Mississippi, 1960-1970

	Urban Counties			Rural Counties		
	1960	1970	Change	1960	1970	Change
	N (%)	N (%)	(%)	N (%)	N (%)	(%)
Total Population	266,981 (100%)	297,247 (111.3%)	+11.3%	161,466 (100%)	147,529 (91.4%)	- 8.6%
Poverty Count	103,701 (38.8%)	79,362 (26.7%)	-12.1%	97,632 (60.5%)	63,957 (43.3%)	-17.2%
Median Family Income	Dollar					
	$4,133 (100%)	$7,513 (181.6%)	+81.6%	$2,344 (100%)	$4,591 (195.9%)	+95.9%
White		$10,168			$6,641	
Black		$ 3,822			$2,931	

I-3. The fact that in 1960's the poverty mitigation was greater in the rural than urban areas seems to be mainly a result of considerable outmigration or job change of poor farm population in the rural counties (from 25.4% in 1960 to 12.1% in 1970 as shown in Table I-3) and slightly related to the somewhat better improvement of median school years in the rural counties than the urban counties.

On the other hand, the disproportionately higher incidence of rural poverty in Southwest Mississippi remains a serious social and political problem. An analysis of socio-economic characteristics of the rural counties reveals somewhat higher correlation of poverty with race, farm residence, education, unemployment, aging, and family structure than those of urban counties. As Table I-4 indicates, the rural counties have almost 8 percent more black population and 11 percent more farm population than the urban counties. This implies that a large number of poor black farm population still remains a major source of persistent and chronic rural poverty. Such rural poverty is also due to lack of proper education, higher unemployment rate, and greater number of elderly as compared with the urban counties. As shown in Table I-4, the percentage of persons whose age is 25 years old or over with median school years in the rural counties in 1970 was only 10 percent as compared with 12 percent in the urban. The higher unemployment rate in the rural than urban counties is also an indication of the disproportionately higher incidence of rural poverty (5.9 percent versus 3.8 percent respectively).

Age is definitely another factor in this respect. Older persons represent a disproportionately higher share of rural poverty than of urban poverty. As shown in Table I-4, the elderly poor accounted for 7.1 percent of the rural population as compared with only 3.5 percent of the urban population in 1970. Poverty among the rural elderly is particularly aggravated by the problems associated with aging. The elderly are likely to have greater health care needs and often are less able to cope with drafty houses, inadequate nutrition, and lack or rural public transportation.

The poor are often stereotyped as members of families without a male head. However, this type of family is not preponderant among the rural poor in Southwest Mississippi. In 1970, 74.5 percent of the rural poor families were headed by males in contrast to only 59.4 percent of the urban poor. But the incidence of poor families with male heads and children under age 18 was proportionately higher in the urban than rural areas (64.7 percent versus 58.9 percent respectively) as shown in Table I-4. From these we can infer that urban male heads of poverty families are generally younger than their counterparts in the rural counties of Southwest Mississippi.

In contrast, the incidence of female headed poor families was much higher in the urban than rural counties as shown in Table I-4 (40.6 percent versus 25.5 percent respectively). But the proportions of families with children under

Table I-3

Comparison of Socio-economic Factors related to Poverty Mitigation between the Urban and Rural Counties in Southwest Mississippi, 1960-1970

	Urban Counties		Rural Counties		Difference
	N	(%)	N	(%)	(%)
Black Population*					
1960	113,162	(42.4%)	81,453	(50.4%)	- 8.0%
1970	120,262	(40.5%)	71,496	(48.4%)	- 7.9%
Farm Population*					
1960	12,610	(4.7%)	40,996	(25.4%)	-20.7%
1970	5,221	(1.8%)	17,831	(12.1%)	-10.3%
Age 25 and over with Median School Year*					
1960	29,601	(11.1%)	14,013	(8.7%)	+ 2.4%
1970	35,717	(12.0%)	14,698	(10.0%)	+ 2.0%
Unemployment Rate**					
1960	4,811	(4.7%)	2,749	(5.3%)	- .6%
1970	4,331	(3.8%)	2,803	(5.9%)	- 2.1%

*Percentage of total population

**Percentage of total civilian labor force

Table I-4

Comparison of Socio-economic Variables related to Poverty between the Urban and Rural Counties in Southwest Mississippi, 1969, 1970

	Urban Counties		Rural Counties		Difference
	N	(%)	N	(%)	(%)
Black Population* 1970	120,262	(40.5%)	71,496	(48.4%)	- 7.9%
Farm Population* 1970	5,221	(1.8%)	17,831	(12.1%)	-10.3%
Age 25 and over with Median School Year* 1970	35,717	(12.0%)	14,698	(10.0%)	+2.0%
Unemployment Rate** 1970	4,331	(3.8%)	2,803	(5.9%)	- 2.1%
Persons 65 and Up below Poverty Level*** 1969	10,534	(13.3%)	10,545	(16.5%)	- 3.2%
Poverty Families headed by Male**** 1969	8,867	(59.4%)	9,634	(74.5%)	-15.1%
with Children under Age 18 (1969)*****	5,737	(64.7%)	5,670	(58.9%)	+5.8%
Poverty Families headed by Female**** 1969	6,064	(40.6%)	3,296	(25.5%)	+15.1%
with Children under Age 18 (1969)*****	5,159	(78.1%)	2,529	(76.7%)	+1.4%
Employed Male heads of Poverty families**	4,745	(6.6%)	4,567	(13.0%)	- 6.4%

Percentage of total population
**Percentage of total civilian labor force*
***Percentage of total poverty count*
****Percentage of total poverty family count*
*****Percentage of total poverty families headed by male (or female)*

age 18 are almost equal between the urban and rural counties (78.1 percent versus 76.7 percent respectively).

The importance of the family structure of the rural poor in Southwest Mississippi appears to be that the poor rural families are often more active in the labor force than those in the urban counties. For example, 13 percent of employed civilian labor force in the rural counties in 1970 were male heads of poverty families in contrast to only 6.6 percent in the urban counties (Table I-4). In sum, all these trends of the relationship between the family structure of rural poverty and employment are sufficient to assume that rural poverty in Southwest Mississippi is often not a result of widespread unemployment. Rather it appears to be a product of the relatively lower wages or the part-time nature or seasonal types of many jobs available in rural labor markets. In turn, this may be also a function of limited skills and training or inadequate education among the rural population and the lack of employment opportunities.

2. Categories of the Poor by Source of Income

The incidence of poverty in Southwest Mississippi proportionately was much higher in the rural than urban counties in 1970, as pointed out earlier. An examination of categories of the poor as defined by source of income, however, reveals little difference in the regional distribution of income sources between the rural and urban counties.

Three categories of poor families defined by source of income are: (1) families in poverty with earned income, (2) families in poverty with income from social security or railroad retirement benefits, and (3) families in poverty with income from public assistance or welfare. As Table I-5 reveals, the differences between the rural and urban counties in Southwest Mississippi are relatively minor in terms of income types among the poor. However, some minor differences appear to be important enough for a better understanding of the rural poverty.

Table I-5 shows a slight difference between the rural and urban counties for the earned income type of poor with about 4 percent more such families in the urban counties. This seems to be due to the higher rate of employment of females, elderly, and youths in the urban areas. This means more availability of jobs in services or manufacturing in the urban than the rural counties, even though most of the jobs may offer low-wage or part-time employment. But it seems equally true that most of urban poor who are working are also lacking skills or training needed for better paying jobs.

In addition, the percentages of poor families in the rural and urban areas who had income from earnings in 1970 indicates that a large portion of the poor have income from participation in the labor force. In the urban areas more than 70 percent of the poor families have at least some earned income as compared with 66.1 percent of the rural poor families (Table I-5). This

Table I-5

Comparison of Income Sources of Poverty Families between Urban and Rural Counties of Southwest Mississippi 1970

	Urban Counties		Rural Counties	
	No. of Families	% of All Poverty Families	No. of Families	% of All Poverty Families
All Families in Poverty	14,931	100%	12,930	100%
Families in Poverty with Earned Income	10,480	70.2%	8,548	66.1%
Families in Poverty with Income from Social Security or Railroad	4,510	30.2%	4,868	37.6%
Families in Poverty with Income from Public Assistance	4,142	27.7%	3,424	26.5%

high rate is somewhat surprising. This implies that many working poor are troubled by poverty because of their large families, low-wage, part-time employment, or lack of skill or training.

The percentage of families in poverty who have income from social security or railroad retirement benefits are shown in Table I-5. Since this type of poverty is most often associated with old age, it is found in both the urban and rural areas. Not surprisingly, however, the higher incidence is found in the rural areas. This confirms the earlier finding that there was a disproportionately higher share of elderly poor in the rural than urban counties. But that fewer than 31 percent of the poor families in the urban areas and 38 percent in the rural areas have income from these sources may reflect recent increases in social security benefits. The 1967 increases in social security, for example, raised the income of about a million aged persons above the poverty level (Levitan, 1969).

The percentage of poor families who have income from public assistance are also mapped in Table I-5. Interestingly, about one-fourth of poverty families in Southwest Mississippi were dependent upon public assistance in 1970. But there was only slight difference in percentage between the rural and urban areas in this respect (26.5 percent versus 27.7 percent respectively). As seen above, the differences of income types of poor between the rural and urban counties are relatively minor, if any. But even these minor differences again seem to confirm the differences of socio-economic traits of the rural and urban counties discussed earlier.

Summary and Conclusions

An examination of socio-economic characteristics of the rural poor as compared with the urban poor shows that in 1970 those who most suffered from poverty and had least hope to escape from it were most likely to be rural poor blacks. In other words, blacks in the rural areas are significantly more likely to be poor than whites are. They seem to be more destined to be poor because they tend to lack proper education or job training, many of them are too old to work, and due to the scarcity of employment opportunity in the rural areas.

Furthermore, even though almost two-thirds of the rural poor participate in the labor force, they remain poor because they are paid poorly, work in part-time or seasonal type of employment, or their families are too big to overcome poverty with their earned income. More than one-third of the rural poor are elderly, whose income from social security or railroad retirement benefits are not enough to help them escape from poverty.

A quarter of the rural poor was supported by the public assistance, which was not enough to make them free of destitution. These poor people seem to be mostly members of rural poor families headed by females. On the other hand, almost three-fourths of the rural poor families were headed by male,

and about a half of them (4,567 out of 9,634 male heads of poverty families shown in Table I-4) were employed in 1969. But their earned income was not enough for their families to enjoy a decent living.

In sum, the data presented here have indicated that some mitigation of the rural poverty in the 1960's was mainly affected by a heavy outmigration of the poor rural farmers and by improvement of living conditions of rural whites. This means that despite massive government programs to eliminate poverty with the "war on poverty" in the 1960's, most of poor blacks in the rural counties of Southwest Mississippi remained poor. Therefore, the rural black poor need to be treated with more practical and adequate measures of public assistance which can help them escape from poverty permanently rather than those which seem to perpetuate them to remain in poverty.

Introduction

It is widely believed by "culture of poverty" advocates that the poor are most likely to have certain common traits irrespective of race and residence. More to the point, it is assumed in the concept of "culture of poverty" that poverty supersedes basic ethnic and cultural orientations as a dominant determinant of attitudes and values. This view once was so influential that, when approaching poverty problems, many people unhesitantly entertained a nineteenth century premise that the poor is poor through their own lack of ability and self-perpetuation. Such a notion, however, remains controversial and is viewed by critics as largely unsubstantiated.

The purposes of this study are twofold. The first is to test the validity of a notion of the "culture of poverty" as it relates to attitude and value traits. The second is to provide some empirical evidence that race is likely to be more significant and powerful than poverty as an attitude and value determinant in rural areas of Mississippi. At the outset, however, it seems appropriate to admit that this study is of very limited kind in scope and data. But it intends to supplement some recent empirical findings which critically questioned the validity of some poverty culture traits (Irelan et al., 1969; Kutner, 1975).

Review of Lewis' "Culture of Poverty"

Social scientists often use the concept of culture as a frame of reference to study and understand the ways in which social conditions lead to differences in group attitudes and behavior. One of them is anthropologist Oscar Lewis who did an intensive study of the poor and consequently developed the concept of the "culture of poverty." One of his major notions of the "culture of poverty" implies that a virtually exclusive and self-perpetuating subculture exists among the poor regardless of race and place of residence. According to Lewis (1966:21),

> *Once it comes into existence it tends to perpetuate itself from generation to generation because of its effect on the children. By the time slum children are age six or seven they have usually absorbed the basic values and attitudes of their subculture and are not pyschologically geared to take full advantage of changing conditions or increased opportunities which may occur in their lifetime.*

Lewis (1966:19) further noted that "wherever it occurs, its practitioners exhibit remarkable similarity in the structure of their families, in interpersonal

relations, in spending habits, in their value systems and in their orientation in time."

His extensive studies of poverty in various countries have also identified some seventy traits of poverty culture. And one of his four major dimensions of the trait system is of the attitudes, values, and character structure of the individual. In this regard, he (1966:23) succinctly argued that "the individual who grows up in this culture has a strong feeling of fatalism, helplessness, dependence, and inferiority." In addition, Lewis also described social alienation and cynicism as outstanding characteristics of the poor (1964:154; 1965:xlvi). Accordingly, it seems reasonable to assume that such negative feelings as fatalism, powerlessness, helplessness, dependence, alienation, and inferiority are more likely to be prevalent among those in poverty regardless of ethnicity and place of residence than among any other types of population group.

One critical question with regard to the "culture of poverty" still concerns its validity. Indeed, many critics have raised serious doubts regarding Lewis' concepts and methods as they related to the theory of the "culture of poverty." For example, Leacock (1971) was very critical of Lewis' use of the culture concept in such a way as to make it certain that the poor are totally responsible themselves for their destitution. Valentine (1971) critically pointed out the inadequacy of Lewis' methods of research and analysis in some important aspects associated with the culture of poverty. Leeds (1971) also commented that "the concept of the culture of poverty poses a number of problems. . .These issues are theoretical-conceptual, methodological, and ethical-civic." Rossi and Blum (1968) pointed out the importance of badly needed systematic, empirical evaluation of Lewis' poverty characteristics.

Empirical studies carried out to date are not sufficient to either support or disparage Lewis's theory of the "culture of poverty," but certainly enough to encourage further empirical study to test and discredit some notions explicit in the theory. Irelan et al. (1969), for example, found little difference between the recipients and non-recipients of public assistance among their Spanish-speaking sample, and suggested that "the culture of poverty concept. . .may have limited general utility and should be re-examined" (412). They further suggested, however, that future studies need to include a control group of non-poor "to tell any similarities reflect a culture common to the poor or one more broadly based in individual societies" (1969:413).

Kutner's empirical study (1975) focused on any significant differences between poor and non-poor in each of six ethnic/residence population groups (Spanish, black, and white/metro and non-metro). Her findings also revealed little empirical evidence supporting Lewis' poverty traits. In contrast to Lewis' view, her study claims that the so-called poverty traits are more common to Spanish-speaking people, regardless of income level, and that among black and white population groups, place of residence (urban and rural) appears to be an important variable affecting their attitudes and values.

Based upon her findings, Kutner (1975:202) speculated:

> *. . . for the black population, the metropolitan setting is associated with more distinctive life-ways among the poor. For the white population, on the other hand, the non-metropolitan setting may be associated with more distinctive life-ways among the poor.*

This implies that unlike non-poor urban black people, non-poor rural black families are most likely to feel disadvantaged as poor black families are, while non-poor rural whites are somewhat different from poor rural whites in their attitudes and behavior.

Hypotheses

On the basis of the above literature review, the following hypotheses are made to be tested for this study.

1. Lewis' notion explicit in the "culture of poverty" as related to attitude and value dimension - poverty overrides basic ethnic orientation as a dominant determinant - is not likely to be fully substantiated.
2. In rural setting, certain negative attitude and value traits - a strong feeling of fatalism, helplessness, dependence, alienation, and inferiority - are more distinctively associated with ethnicity than poverty.
3. As suggested by Kutner, in rural setting poor and non-poor white population groups are more likely to part from each other than those of black population in their attitudinal traits.

Source of Data

Data used here to test the above mentioned hypotheses were collected in Mississippi during the summer of 1981 as part of the region wide questionnaire survey conducted for a regional research project called "The Isolation of Factors Related to Levels and Patterns of Living in the Rural South" (RR-1, USDA). The RR-1 sample procedure (for detailed information, see appendix) was based on ten state samples of at least 240 respondents each. The multistage sampling procedure includes three sample counties within each state which may be described as racially-mixed, rural counties with low median family incomes. Within these three counties of each state, sample sizes were assigned in proportion to each sample county's population. Based upon this sampling procedure, Leake, Noxubee, and Quitman counties were selected for the survey in Mississippi, and 96, 72, and 80 respondents were selected from the three counties respectively, 248 in total sample size.

The three counties sampled in Mississippi are racially-mixed and poor with

transfer payments as the major income source. For example, the per capita incomes in 1979 for Leake, Noxubee, and Quitman counties were $5,105, $4,924, and $4,515 respectively, while the per capita income average of Mississippi was $6,200 (Bureau of Economic Analysis, Personal Income by Major Sources, 1974-1979, April, 1981). In these counties, trained interviewers conducted interviews with the head of selected families based upon the regionally adopted sampling procedures, and collected data from 248 respondents.

The questionnaire consists of five sections: 1. Demographic information; 2. Community and life satisfaction; 3. Values, attitudes and beliefs; 4. Consumer behavior and personal income; and 5. Political behavior. Of these data, family income, race of respondents, and eighteen items of values, attitudes and beliefs questions are selected for this study.

Types of Respondent Groups

The distinction between poor and non-poor for this study is made on the basis of the methods developed by Mollie Orshansky and her associates in the Social Security Administration. Accordingly, the poverty lines are drawn with annual family incomes by its pre-tax, post-transfer cash income for the year, excluding capital gains or losses (Orshansky, 1965:3-29). Since poor people spend about one third of their income on food, the minimum food budgets calculated by Department of Agriculture for various sizes of family are multiplied by three to obtain the minimum income or poverty line for families in different locations. The poverty income table used in the survey is presented in Table II-1.

Table II-1. Poverty Income Thresholds for Families

Family Size	Farm Income	Non-farm Income
1	$3250	$3790
2	4280	5010
3	5310	6230
4	6340	7450
5	7370	8670
6	8400	9890
Over 6 members add:	$1030 per person	$1220

Looking down the column for family size, the interviewer read the corresponding poverty threshold income figure to the respondent in the following way: "Did you earn more than (figure) during 1980?"[1] Subsequently, families characterized as "poor" in this study are those who answer "no" and families characterized as "non-poor" are those whose answer was "yes." The resulting distribution of respondents in terms of poverty status and race are shown in Table II-2.

Table II-2. Distribution of Respondent Groups

Poverty Status	Black (N)	White (N)	Total
Poor (N)	68	71	139
Non-poor (N)	28	78	106
Total	96	149	245*

**Among the 248 respondents, there were three Indian families which are excluded from this analysis.*

Items Indicating Attitudinal Traits

All eighteen attitudinal items selected here to measure a strong feeling of fatalism, helplessness, alienation, dependence, powerlessness, and inferiority are of the Likert-type allowing one of five responses: Strongly Agree; Agree; Undecided; Disagree; and Strongly Disagree. They were all viewed as somehow reflecting and indicating, directly or indirectly, some of attitudinal traits of poverty culture identified by Lewis. For the analytical purposes, however, these items were categorized into several specific attitudinal traits: fatalism, helplessness, inferiority, dependence, alienation, and value of work.

Attitudinal items indicating these particular traits are as follows:

1. To determine poverty status, we used information about family's annual income, the number of persons in the household who depend on the income as their sole means of support, and farm/non-farm occupation of family head.

Fatalism

1. Making plans only brings unhappiness because the plans are hard to fulfill.
2. With things as they are today a person ought to think only about the present and not worry about what is going to happen tomorrow.
3. The secret of happiness is not expecting too much out of life and being content with what comes your way.
4. It is important to make plans for one's life and not just accept what comes.*

Helplessness

5. Most people try to use you.
6. I certainly feel useless at times.
7. Some people can get by with almost anything while others take the rap.

Inferiority

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
9. People here give you a bad name if you insist on being different.
10. I am able to do things as well as other people.*

Dependence

11. You must spend lots of money to be accepted in this community.
12. When you are in trouble only a relative can be depended upon to help you.

Alienation

13. Real friends are hard to find in this community.
14. No one seems to care how this community looks.*
15. I feel welcome going to public activities in this community.*

Value of Work

16. Work is something I do in order to earn some money.
17. If I had enough money to support myself and my family, I would never work.
18. Work is proof of an individual's worth to himself.*

**Negative responses to the items indicate a feeling of these negative attitudinal traits.*

No particular attitude toward work has been specifically discussed by Lewis as a poverty trait. It is implied, however, in his notions that the culture of poverty exists in a society which values thrift and upward mobility highly (Lewis, 1966:21), and that a distinctive characteristic of a poverty culture is its repugnance to the larger culture's values (Lewis, 1964:154; 1966:23). Thus, it seems reasonable to expect that certain negative attitudes toward work, if any, may be more pervasive among the poor than the non-poor.

Methods

In order to analyze, measure, and compare attitudinal characteristics of respondent groups, responses of the people to all the eighteen items were converted into the form of a five-point scale. This scale allows us to give 5 points to each "strongly agree" response, 4 to each "agree" response, 3 to each "undecided" response, 2 to each "disagree" response, and 1 to each "strongly disagree" response to the negatively worded statement items. And, for the positively worded statement items (only 4 out of the 18 items), points given to each of the five responses are reversed in order to establish consistent patterns of scoring on the negative-positive attitudinal continuum scale. Subsequently, mean scores of various respondent groups studied here for each item are calculated, excluding "DK/NA" responses.

This method provides summary statistics which indicate the extent and direction of attitudinal traits in terms of the negative and positive continuum. In other words, mean scores closer to 5.0 indicate extremely negative attitudes or feeling of fatalism, helplessness, dependence, alienation, inferiority, and lack of interest in working, while mean scores closer to 1.0 mean extremely positive attitudes. Meanwhile, the mean score of 3.0 is regarded here as a dividing point between the negative and positive attitudes. Some critics may point out that a mean score of 3.0 could be achieved either by having an equal distribution between "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree" responses, or by having all respondents say "undecided." However, a careful item-analysis and pre-testing assures that the probability of such occurances are considerably reduced for the data.

For statistical tests of significance in differences of attitudes and values between various respondent groups, this study used an unweighted-means analysis for 2 x 2 factorial analysis of variance with unequal cell frequencies (Winter, 1971:445-449) and the Newman-Keuls Test (Kirk, 1968:93) at alpha levels of .05 and .01.

**Negative responses to the items indicate a feeling of these negative attitudinal traits.*

Empirical Findings

In the analysis that follows, this study first examined the validity of Lewis' notion of the poverty culture as it relates to the so-called attitudes and value systems of poverty. We analyzed the data to test the first hypothesis - poverty overrides basic ethnic orientation as an attitude and value determinant. If this notion is true, then we could expect that the poor and the non-poor would manifest significant differences on more attitudinal items investigated here than the black and the white. As Table II-3 indicates, however, an examination of the data reveals just an opposite pattern: the black and the white samples differ significantly from each other on 13 out of the 18 items (72.2%), while the poor and the non-poor only on 5 items (27.8%).

Another approach to this question is to compare attitudinal differences between poor black and poor white. If there is substantial evidence for Lewis' assumption that the poor, regardless of ethnicity, are likely to have certain common attitudinal and value traits, we should expect to see from the data that the poor blacks and the poor whites in rural setting have few differences in their attitudes and values identified by Lewis as poverty traits. However, Table II-4 clearly shows that the black and white poor samples differ significantly from each other on 11 out of 18 selected items (61.6%) for this study.

These findings appear to be sufficient to support the hypothesis that Lewis' notion that poverty overrides basic ethnic orientation as a dominant attitude and value determinant is not likely to be fully substantiated. Certainly, no one would doubt that prolonged conditions of poverty, wherever it occurs, affects persons' perception, self-evaluation as well as their attitudes and values. The limited data analyzed here do, however, provide sufficient evidence to assume that poverty is not necessarily the dominant determinant of attitudes and values of the people of all cultures: that is, factors other than poverty could be more significantly influential in shaping and maintaining certain attitudes and values varying from one culture to other and from one group to other.

The second hypothesis is concerned with a comparison between ethnicity and poverty in terms of their association with certain negative attitudinal traits assumed by Lewis to be common among the poor. In this respect, we were primarily interested in finding some empirical reasons to believe that the extent of negativism in a wider variety of the attitudinal traits is likely to be stronger and more pervasive among the blacks than among the poor in rural South. As a close examination of Table II-5 indicates, the blacks showed negativism (more than 3.0) on 10 (55.6%) out of the 18 items, while the poor responded negatively on only 8 of them (44.4%). Furthermore, as shown in Table II-5, on the average the black samples as a whole were expressing slightly deeper negative feelings than the poor, with 8 out of the ten items to which the former made negative responses. In contrast, the poor

Table II-3. Comparison of Frequencies of Significant Differences between Black and White, and between Poor and Non-poor on the eighteen Selected Items

Item	Poor	Non-poor		Black	White	
	Mean	Scores	F***	Mean	Scores	F
Fatalism						
Item 1	3.34	2.62	12.9**	3.59	2.73	26.8**
Item 2	3.53	2.92	9.1**	3.74	2.97	23.2**
Item 3	3.57	3.41	.9	3.62	3.42	1.3
Item 4	2.39	2.07	3.1	2.33	2.19	1.4
Helplessness						
Item 5	2.96	2.67	.0	3.46	2.44	50.8**
Item 6	3.53	2.81	15.3**	3.45	3.07	3.3
Item 7	3.78	3.50	.5	3.90	3.51	10.5**
Inferiority						
Item 8	2.79	2.39	2.0	2.97	2.39	19.7**
Item 9	2.91	2.88	.0	3.40	2.57	50.8**
Item 10	3.36	2.32	39.4**	2.86	2.94	1.8
Dependence						
Item 11	2.28	2.11	.1	2.58	1.97	28.6**
Item 12	2.70	2.33	.9	3.06	2.21	41.6**
Alienation						
Item 13	3.13	2.55	5.1*	3.50	2.48	39.4**
Item 14	2.57	2.27	1.9**	2.96	2.11	37.8**
Item 15	2.21	2.16	.2	2.33	2.10	6.0*
Value of Work						
Item 16	3.68	3.55	.7	3.87	3.34	7.4*
Item 17	2.38	2.34	.2	2.74	2.12	21.0**
Item 18	2.11	1.96	2.0	2.16	1.97	3.1
Freq. of Sig. of Diff.			5			13

*Significant at .05

**Significant at .01

***To test significance of difference, F scores are obtained by using an unweighted means analysis for a 2 x 2 factorial analysis of variance with unequal cell frequencies.

Table II-4. Frequencies of Significant Differences on the eighteen Selected Items between Poor Black and Poor White

Item	Poor Black	Poor White	
	Mean Scores		Differences
Fatalism			
Item 1	3.62	3.07	.55*
Item 2	3.82	3.26	.56*
Item 3	3.68	3.46	.22
Item 4	2.31	2.46	-.15
Helplessness			
Item 5	3.43	2.51	.92*
Item 6	3.57	3.49	.08
Item 7	3.81	3.76	.05
Inferiority			
Item 8	2.93	2.66	.27
Item 9	3.38	2.46	.92*
Item 10	2.97	3.74	-.77*
Dependence			
Item 11	2.59	1.99	.60*
Item 12	3.03	2.39	.64*
Alienation			
Item 13	3.57	2.71	.86*
Item 14	3.06	2.11	.95*
Item 15	2.28	2.14	.14
Value of Work			
Item 16	3.96	3.41	.55*
Item 17	2.76	2.01	.75*
Item 18	2.22	2.00	.22
Frequencies of Significant of Differences			11

Significant at .05 by the Newman-Keuls Test.

manifested a stronger negativism, as compared with the blacks, only on Item 10 (3.36 vs. 2.86) which is concerned with self-evaluation in terms of being capable, competent, successful, and worthy. In fact, such low self-esteem among the poor samples as a whole is entirely due to a result of the poor whites' negative responses to Item 10 that says "I am able to do things as well as other people."

It is somewhat interesting to see that in this particular case the poor whites alone have a distinctively negative self-evaluation (3.74), as compared with the poor blacks, the non-poor blacks and the non-poor whites (2.97, 2.58 and 2.22 respectively which all denote positive elements). It is as if they alone dealt with the struggle – almost always a losing struggle – against the impersonal, pitiless forces of their natural and social environment. Aside from this particular incidence, it is evident, as shown in Table II-4, that almost all attitudinal traits examined here appear to be slightly deeper and more pervasive among blacks than among the poor in rural environment, supporting the second hypothesis.

The third hypothesis is based on Kutner's suggestion (1975:202) that in rural settings the so-called attitudinal traits of poverty are much more common to blacks in general, regardless of socio-economic status, whereas these traits are almost exclusively associated with poor whites. In fact, the data collected for this study from rural counties of Mississippi appear to strongly support Kutner's findings.

As indicated in Table II-6, a comparison between the poor and non-poor blacks in terms of their responses points out no significant differences for any of the 18 items. In contrast, the poor and non-poor whites show significant differences on 8 of them (44.4%). These negative attitudes among the poor whites are most likely related to a feeling of fatalism, helplessness, and inferiority to a mild extent. However, a comparison between the poor and non-poor whites in terms of their responses indicates that the former differs distinctively from the latter as being considerably fatalistic, purposeless, highly suspicious of prevailing legal and social norms, socially alienated, and, above all, with a low self-esteem. However, it is equally evident from the data that the rural blacks in general have slightly deeper feelings of fatalism, helplessness, purposelessness, dependence, and alienation as compared with the rural poor whites.

In any way, the data examined here again present strong evidence to support the third hypothesis – in rural settings poor and non-poor white population groups are more likely to differ from each other than those of black populations in their attitudinal traits.

Summary and Conclusions

This study challenged, with empirical data, the validity of Lewis' notion of the poverty culture as related to the so-called attitude and value traits

Table II-5. Comparison of Degrees of Attitudinal Negativism-Positivism between Black and Poor

Item	Black	Poor	
	Mean Scores		Differences
Fatalism			
Item 1	3.57	3.34	.23
Item 2	3.74	3.53	.21
Item 3	3.62	3.57	.05
Item 4	2.33	2.39	-.06
Helplessness			
Item 5	3.46	2.96	.50
Item 6	3.45	3.53	-.08
Item 7	3.90	3.78	.12
Inferiority			
Item 8	2.97	2.79	.18
Item 9	3.40	2.91	.49
Item 10	2.86	3.36	-.50
Dependence			
Item 11	2.58	2.28	.30
Item 12	3.06	2.70	.36
Alienation			
Item 13	3.50	3.13	.37
Item 14	2.96	2.57	.39
Item 15	2.33	2.21	.12
Value of Work			
Item 16	3.87	3.68	.19
Item 17	2.74	2.38	.36
Item 18	2.16	2.11	.05

**Scores > 3.0 indicate negative/Scores < 3.0 indicate positive.*

Table II-6. Frequencies of Significant Differences on the eighteen Selected Items between Poor and Non-poor Black, and between Poor White and Non-poor White

Item	Poor Black	Non-Poor Black		Poor White	Non-Poor White	
	Mean	Scores	F***	Mean	Scores	F
Fatalism						
Item 1	3.62	3.29	.33	3.07	2.41	.66*
Item 2	3.82	3.52	.30	3.26	2.70	.56*
Item 3	3.68	3.48	.20	3.46	3.39	.07
Item 4	2.31	2.39	-.08	2.46	1.95	.51*
Helplessness						
Item 5	3.43	3.52	-.09	2.51	2.37	.14
Item 6	3.57	3.16	.41	3.49	2.68	.81*
Item 7	3.81	4.10	-.29	3.76	3.28	.48*
Inferiority						
Item 8	2.93	3.07	-.14	2.66	2.14	.52*
Item 9	3.38	3.45	-.07	2.46	2.67	-.21
Item 10	2.97	2.58	.39	3.74	2.22	1.52*
Dependence						
Item 11	2.59	2.55	.04	1.99	1.95	.04
Item 12	3.03	3.13	-.10	2.39	2.04	.35
Alienation						
Item 13	3.57	3.32	.25	2.71	2.28	.43*
Item 14	3.06	2.71	.35	2.11	2.11	.0
Item 15	2.28	2.45	-.17	2.14	2.06	.08
Value of Work						
Item 16	3.96	3.65	.31	3.41	3.52	-.11
Item 17	2.76	2.68	.08	2.01	2.22	-.21
Item 18	2.22	2.03	.19	2.00	1.94	.06
			0			8

*Significant at .05 by the Newman-Keuls Test.

assumed to be distinctively common among the poor, regardless of race and place of residence. To this end, it developed, tested, and provided significant empirical findings to support the three hypotheses, which are proposed to challenge Lewis' notion.

Although the strength of the evidence may be questioned by some critics and vary depending upon which hypothesis is under consideration mainly due to not including some potentially important variables such as education, welfare dependency, poverty cycles of family, or urban setting, the findings do support the underlying assumption of the study that among the poor of different cultural and ethnic groups exist important variations in attitudes and values that are attributable to factors other than poverty.

Despite Lewis' claim for the dominant and uniform role of poverty in forming, conditioning, and prepetuating certain attitudes, values, and character structure of the individual in all cultures, it is evident from the data and from some empirical findings of Irelan et al. (1969) and Kutner (1975) that certain attitudinal traits of "poverty culture" are likely to be more common to the Spanish-speaking people than to American blacks and whites, and are likely to be more common to the rural American blacks in general than the rural whites, regardless of their income level. In summary, it is strikingly clear that such important differences occur in attitudes as well as many aspects of total life outlook of the poor with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

As pointed out earlier, for example, the rural poor white samples are distinctive in terms of their low self-esteem. In fact, they appear most likely to accept the current conditions of destitution as an almost inescapable way of life with a fatalistic view of self-image that they are incapable of controlling their futures and unable to do things as well as other people. But, quite unlike the rural poor whites, the rural poor blacks appear not likely to share such a low self-esteem.

Instead, rural poor blacks in particular and rural blacks in general are most likely to share somewhat unique life outlook and certain specific attitudes. In other words, while having relatively positive attitudes toward themselves as being capable and competent to do things as well as other people, in spite of their conditions of prolonged economic deprivation, they are most likely to have a relatively deep fatalistic outlook of the world in which they live, a low trust and faith in as well as a strong suspicion toward other people except immediate family members and close relatives, a feeling of social alienation, and, above all, a low degree of confidence in the legal and social norms by which they have to interact with others.

In summary, it seems that many rural blacks in Mississippi are still likely to accept their struggle for life, as if their life is largely overcasted by the fate of Sisyphus who, according to Homeric legend, had been condemned by the gods forever to exert his entire being toward accomplishing nothing. Such prevailing attitudes among the rural blacks in Mississippi seem to be

associated with influences not only of poverty cycles but, to large extent, of many legacies of their past: namely, slavery system, racism, discrimination, and injustice.

Although the data are very limited in nature, this study agrees with a view that formation, change, and perpetuation of certain attitudes and values among the poor of all cultures could be in varying degrees influenced not only by poverty, but also by cultural, historical, and other social variables.

Survey Sampling Procedure

The sample procedure was based on 10 state samples of at least 240 respondents each. The multistage sampling procedure includes three sample counties within each state, at least 30 sample clusters within the three counties and finally eight sample households within each sample cluster.

County Sample Frame (Stage 1) and Sample

The 10 state samples were derived by first defining the list of counties that met the following criteria:

1. Less than 30.01% urban (incorporated places of 2500 or more in census of 1970).
2. More than 400 black population in all states but Kentucky.
3. These counties in each state were arrayed by their median incomes (1970). The lower one-third of the array was defined as the population to be studied. This population of 107 counties in 10 states may be described as racially mixed, rural counties with low median family incomes.

Finally, the list of qualifying counties for each state was arrayed by percent black, lowest to highest. A random starting point between zero and one-third of the total population for all counties in the array was determined by use of a table of random numbers. In the array, the county with a population interval that straddled the random starting point was selected. The second county selected in the array had a population interval that straddled the starting point plus one-third of the total population for the array of counties. The third county selected from the array was the one with a population interval straddling the number equal to the sum of the starting point plus two-thirds of the total population. In general, this procedure yielded a predominantly white county and a one-half black, one-half white county and a predominantly black county.

Sample Size

Within these three counties for each state, sample sizes (N) were assigned in proportion to each sample county's population. Cluster sizes were set at eight households. Thus, with a minimum sample size of 240, each state would have a minimum of 30 clusters. A county would have as many clusters as multiples of eight, or part thereof, fit into its proportionate sample N, e.g. a county with a sample of 81 would yield eleven clusters. Since 11 x 8 equals 88, the actual sample size expected is also 88.

Cluster Sample Frame (Stage 2) and Sample

National geological survey maps (2° series) with a 15 minute by 15 minute grid superimposed were used to define the sampling frame of clusters. Towns of 1000 population or more were arrayed by population size. Clusters were allocated to the town "strata" vs. the county "strata" in proportion to population size. On the list of towns, the clusters were assigned in proportion to population size. Town clusters were located on detailed maps to be procured from the National Geological Survey series (7½ or 15 minute map) and the Bureau of the Census (county and enumeration district maps).

Clusters in the remainder of the county were assigned starting points by random sampling of intersections of the 15 minute grids. Grid lines were numbered 1 to 9 from the bottom to the top and left to right. Two digit numbers were read from a list of random numbers, the first digit denoting a vertical axis and the second a horizontal axis. The first such defined "grid intersection" was used to specify the entry point into the northwest quadrant, i.e. north to the first road and left. The "grid intersection" sampled second provided the starting point for entry into the northeast quadrant by moving due east to the first road and turning left. Similarly, the third quadrant sampled, the southeast quadrant of the third "grid intersection" was entered by moving due South to the road and to the left, the fourth quadrant (southwest) by moving west and left, etc. until starting points for all clusters are identified. No intersection was sampled more than once. All of these starting points were located on the thirty county maps and the appropriate starting direction was noted. As defined below, the survey supervisors did the "ground truth" work on the clusters in their respective states.

Sampled Households

The first eight households found, according to the following procedures, constituted a sample cluster. After entering each sample quadrant on the first road to the left of the starting point, we proceeded in a serpentine fashion. That is, at the first intersection, the first right turn was taken; at the next intersection a left turn was taken, etc. The first eight households identified (exclude vacant houses) on this serpentine route were included in the sample. The survey supervisor photographed (preferably with Polaroid) each sample house, numbered the photos 1 through 8, and drew their location on the map. Each photo had sufficient description on the back to aid the interviewer in finding the house.

Cluster Boundaries

Dead end roads, loops, county lines, and boundaries of towns and clusters already included in the sample were treated as "dead ends". All of these "dead ends" are cluster boundaries. If the serpentine route ran into a cluster boundary or "dead end", we returned to the last intersection. If the last turn

before the "dead end" was to the left, we turned left again from the "dead end" road, or, if the last turn was right, we turned right again. It is possible that all roads form an intersection, but some were "dead ends". If still more households were needed to complete the cluster after all roads have been explored to their end, we returned to the second previous intersection and turned right or left as previously defined for that intersection.

Cluster Maps and Identification

Clusters were marked on county census or city maps by survey supervisors in each state. The sample households had to be identified, photographed and marked on the map. The interviewers were supplied with maps, photographs and directions prepared by survey supervisors to find the sample households. Clusters were numbered sequentially within counties. State, county, cluster, and household identification numbers were prerecorded on maps, photographs and questionnaires.

Respondent Refusal

In the event one or more of the eight households refused to respond as defined by procedures in the questionnaires, the ninth household along the serpentine route was interviewed, etc. until the cluster of eight interviews were obtained. Before substitutions were made for any of the original eight households, clearance had to be given by the survey supervisor. Substitute households interviewed had to be identified by their sequential identification number along the prescribed serpentine route.

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